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STAR WARS
THE HIGH REPUBLIC
SHADOWS OF STARLIGHT
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SOULE
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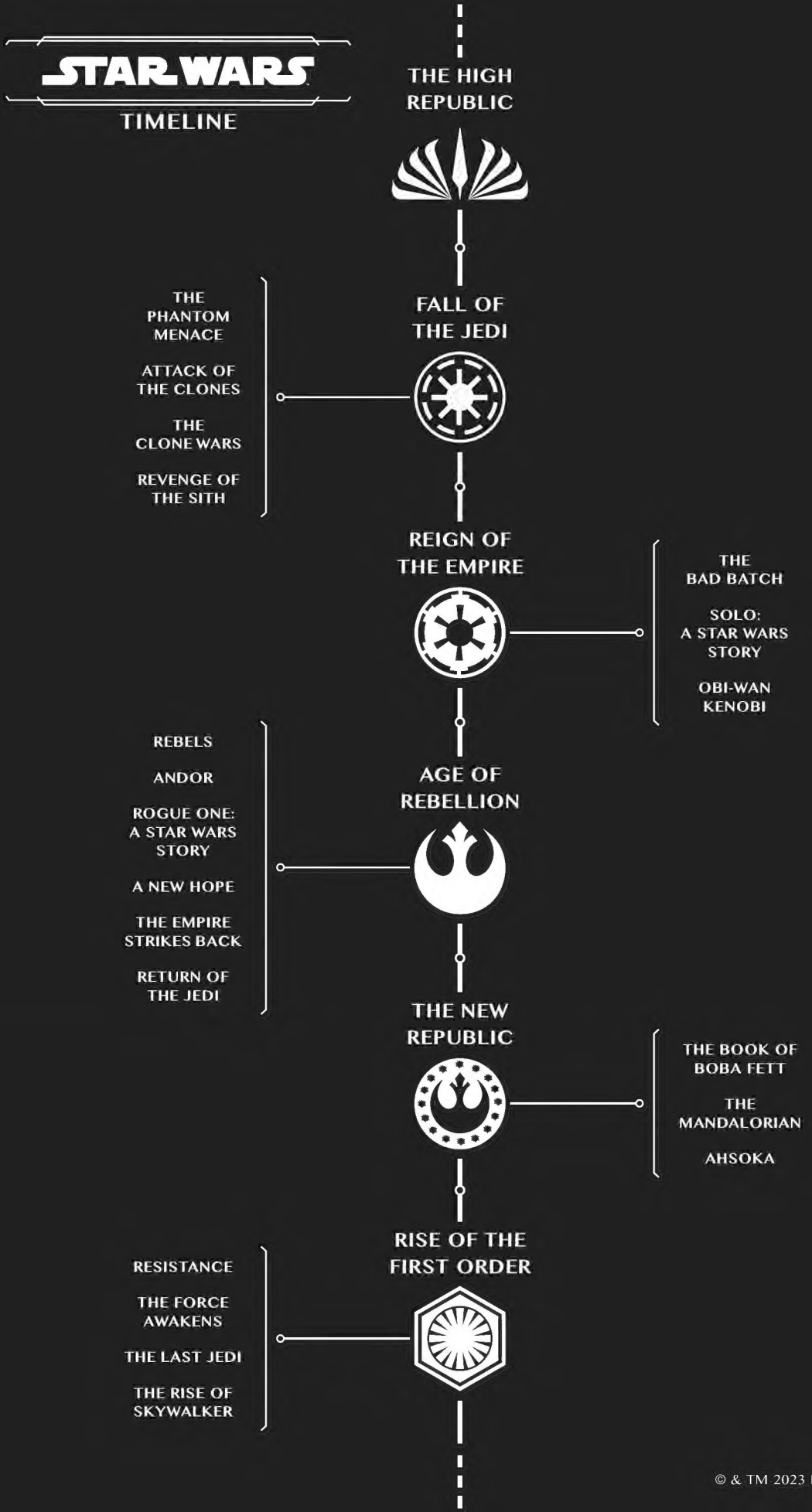

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THE HIGH REPUBLIC
SHADOWS OF STARLIGHT

Centuries before the Clone Wars or the Empire, during the glorious era of THE HIGH REPUBLIC, *the Jedi were at their height.*

The galaxy was at peace until dangerous marauders known as the NIHIL caused THE GREAT DISASTER. *Their attack on the Jedi and the Republic reached its peak with the destruction of* STARLIGHT BEACON, *a space station meant to symbolize hope and unity.*

Now the Jedi have been recalled to Coruscant, fearful of the Nihil and the monstrous creatures they possess....

"EVER VICTORIOUS"

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THE TRIUMPHANT DESTRUCTION OF THE REPUBLIC PROPAGANDA EXERCISE AND COLOSSAL FAILURE KNOWN AS STARLIGHT BEACON.
ONE YEAR AGO.

THE GAZE ELECTRIC.

FLAGSHIP OF ***MARCHION RO,*** EYE OF THE STORM, LEADER OF THE EVER-VICTORIOUS NIHIL.

ONE WEEK AFTER THE FALL OF STARLIGHT BEACON.

THE NIHIL RIPPED OUT THE REPUBLIC'S ***HEART*** AND ***SHOWED IT TO THEM,*** AND THEN WE ***SQUEEZED*** OUR FIST AND LET THE ***BLOOD POUR OUT.***

WE DESTROYED THEIR ***FORTRESS,*** SNUFFED OUT THEIR ***STARLIGHT BEACON...*** ***THEY COULDN'T STOP IT.***

AND LET'S NOT FORGET...

...WE SLAUGHTERED PLENTY OF ***JEDI*** TOO.

THIS IS JUST THE BEGINNING. WE HAVE DEPLOYED OUR ***STORMSEEDS,*** RAISED OUR ***STORMWALL.*** THE REPUBLIC CAN'T TOUCH US.

THIS IS OUR AGE. WE DIDN'T BUY IT OR BEG FOR IT...WE ***TOOK IT!*** WE ***STOLE IT!*** WE ***KILLED EVERYONE WHO STOOD IN OUR WAY!***

NOW, MY PEOPLE, MY GLORIOUS NIHIL...

...SHOW ME THE STORM.

YEAH!

FOR THE NIHIL!

FOR THE EYE!

TWO WEEKS AFTER THE FALL OF STARLIGHT BEACON.

THREE WEEKS.

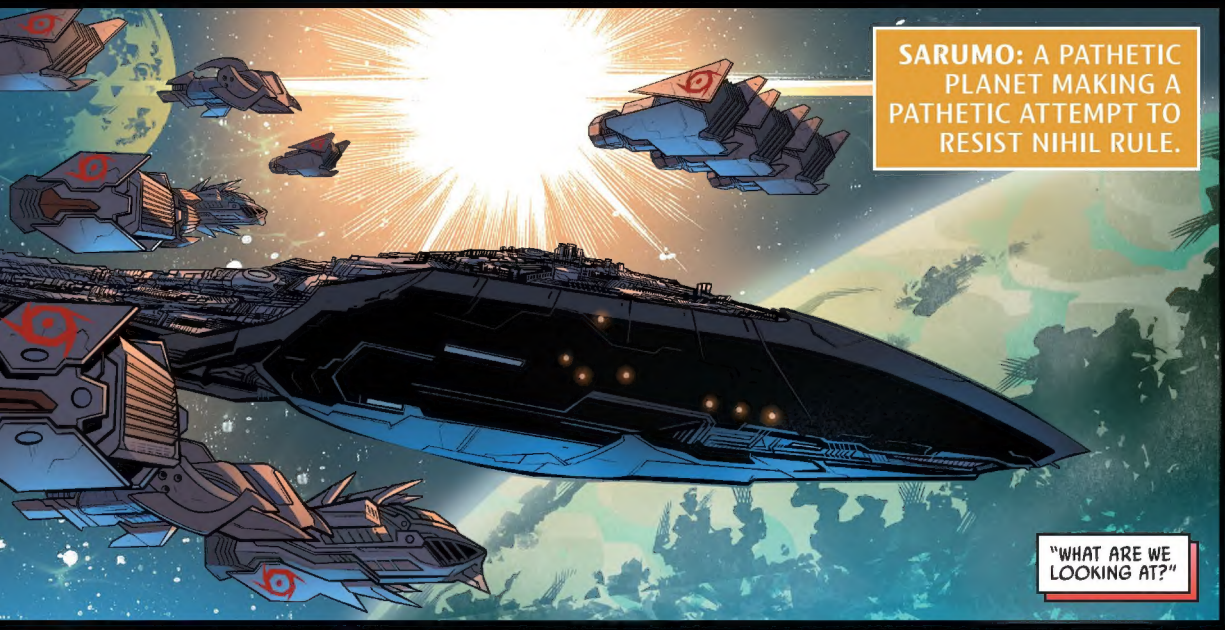
FOUR WEEKS.

FIVE WEEKS.

ONE MONTH AFTER THE FALL.
HNH.
MARCHION.
I HAVE A QUESTION FOR YOU.
OH, GHIRRA? AND WHAT IS THAT?
YOU'VE BEATEN THE REPUBLIC AND THE JEDI AND TAKEN A HUGE PART OF THE GALAXY FOR YOUR OWN.
NOW, MARCHION RO, EYE OF THE NIHIL...
...WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO WITH IT?

TWO MONTHS.
THE OPPORTUNITY HERE IS EXTRAORDINARY. YOU STOLE MULTIPLE SECTORS FROM THE REPUBLIC. I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.
I WAS ONE OF THEIR SENATORS, PART OF THEIR CONFLICT COUNCILS, AND I CAN TELL YOU, THEY NEVER PLANNED FOR AN ENEMY LIKE YOU.
THE NIHIL OCCLUSION ZONE CAN BECOME ANYTHING YOU WANT IT TO BE. YOU CAN BECOME ANYTHING YOU WANT TO BE.
THREE MONTHS.
THIS... IS NOT THE WAY. THESE CELEBRATIONS ARE WELL AND GOOD, BUT THEY CAN'T LAST FOREVER.
WITHOUT SOMETHING TO DO, SOMEONE NEW FOR THE NIHIL TO BECOME, LOCKED UP IN THIS CORNER OF SPACE...WE'LL EAT OURSELVES.
FOUR MONTHS.
WHEN THE HISTORIES ARE WRITTEN OF THIS TIME, DO YOU WANT TO BE JUST ANOTHER OF THE REPUBLIC'S VANQUISHED ENEMIES...
...OR DO YOU WANT TO WRITE THE BLASTED HISTORIES?
YOU ARE A CONQUEROR. THIS IS YOUR MOMENT TO BECOME A LEGEND.
THE STORMWALL YOU BUILT MEANS THE REPUBLIC CAN'T ACCESS NIHIL SPACE. ONLY OUR SHIPS CAN COME AND GO, BECAUSE OF OUR PATH DRIVE TECHNOLOGY.
BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN THE REPUBLIC IS GONE.

THEY'RE HERE, OBVIOUSLY...
...BUT WE ALSO HAVE MANY ENEMIES IN *OUR* SPACE.
REPUBLIC DEFENSE COALITION SHIPS STATIONED HERE BEFORE THE STORMWALL WENT UP, WORLDS LOYAL TO CHANCELLOR SOH, CORPORATIONS WITH REPUBLIC INTERESTS.
AND, OF COURSE... THERE HAVE BEEN *JEDI* AS WELL.
WE HAVE LIMITED TIME BEFORE THOSE ELEMENTS ORGANIZE THEMSELVES INTO AN ACTUAL RESISTANCE *OR* THE REPUBLIC FINDS A WAY TO BREACH THE STORMWALL.
WE NEED TO MAKE THIS TERRITORY TRULY *OURS*, SO THAT WE CAN APPROACH THE REPUBLIC FROM A POSITION OF STRENGTH--AS AN ACTUAL *NIHIL STATE!*
THE TRUE PATH TO VICTORY IS SHOWING YOUR SUBJECTS THEY DON'T *HAVE* TO FIGHT--THAT THE NIHIL WON'T JUST *DESTROY* AND *PLUNDER*...BUT *GOVERN*.
SHOW THEM THEIR LIVES WILL CONTINUE MORE OR LESS AS THEY WERE BEFORE, AND IN TIME, THEY WON'T CARE THAT THEY WERE EVER A PART OF THE REPUBLIC.
YOU WANT ME... MARCHION RO...TO HOLD REFERENDUMS AND SET UP *TRADE ROUTES AND TAX POLICIES?*
YOU WANT THE *EYE OF THE NIHIL*... TO *GOVERN?*
NO, MARCHION. I WILL HANDLE THAT. I'M TRAINED FOR IT, AND I ENJOY IT.
ALL I'M SUGGESTING YOU DO...
...IS *RULE*.


SARUMO: A PATHETIC PLANET MAKING A PATHETIC ATTEMPT TO RESIST NIHIL RULE.
"WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT?"

OUR INFORMANTS SUGGEST THE RESISTANCE EFFORT IS COORDINATED BY A CELL LOCATED IN ONE PRIMARY SETTLEMENT, MY EYE.
IF WE DESTROY IT, THE REST OF THE PEOPLE ON THIS WORLD WILL FALL IN LINE.
SEEMS SIMPLE ENOUGH, ARATHAB. DO THAT.
WE COULD, GREAT MARCHION, BUT THE CITY IS WELL PROTECTED.
IT IS SURROUNDED BY ANTI-BOMBARDMENT WEAPONRY AND HAS A SIGNIFICANT DEFENSE FLEET. A DIRECT ASSAULT WOULD BE COSTLY.

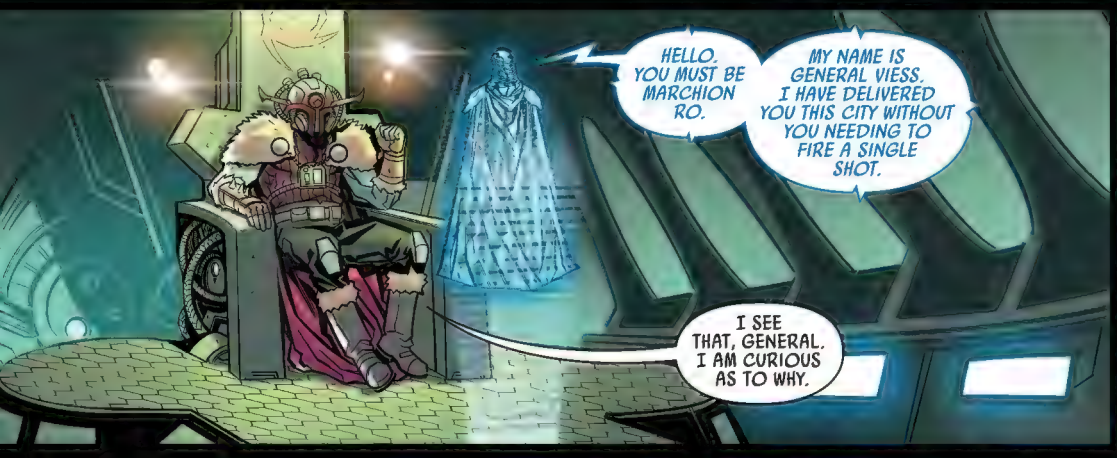
WE WOULD ALL DIE FOR YOU, THERE WOULD BE NO HESITATION. WE WOULD ***GLADLY*** DIE. BUT... THE OTHER SHE'AR AND I WOULD LIKE TO GIVE YOU ***MANY*** VICTORIES, NOT JUST ***THIS*** ONE.
WHAT ARE YOUR ORDERS, MY EYE?
MM.

WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT?
WELL, YOUR HONOR, WE'VE GOT A NIHIL ATTACK FLEET IN ORBIT.
THEY'RE CLEARLY HERE TO TRY TO SETTLE US DOWN SO WE'LL ACCEPT THEIR AUTHORITY AND CONVENIENTLY FORGET WE'RE PART OF THE REPUBLIC.
NOT LIKELY.
ARE WE IN DANGER, MINISTER?
THE REPORTS SUGGEST THE NIHIL AREN'T BIG ON BOMBARDMENT TACTICS.
THEY SEND IN FIGHTERS FOR QUICK STRIKES AND USE CHAOS AND TERROR AS THEIR MAIN WEAPONS. IF THEY ENCOUNTER SERIOUS RESISTANCE, THEY GENERALLY CUT AND RUN.
WE'VE GOT A STRONG DEFENSE GRID. WE CAN HOLD THEM OFF FOR A WHILE.
THE PROBLEM IS WE CAN'T DO IT WITHOUT A COST. WE'LL TAKE LOSSES, AND NOT JUST MILITARY. CIVILIANS TOO.
IF WE COORDINATE ALL OUR DEFENSES *PERFECTLY*, WE COULD TRY TO KEEP THEIR FIGHTERS AWAY FROM THE CITY.
IT'D BE TRICKY. I CAN'T GUARANTEE HOW IT WOULD GO.
I SEE. THANK YOU, MINISTER.
GENERAL VIESS, WOULD YOU BE WILLING TO OFFER YOUR ASSESSMENT?
CERTAINLY, MAYOR SEURATH.
I'M FLATTERED THAT YOU'D ASK.

THAT SAID, I'M RETIRED. I'VE BEEN OUT OF THE WAR GAME FOR A LONG TIME. I'M NOT SURE HOW HELPFUL I'LL BE.
NONSENSE. YOU'RE ABEDIAH VIESS. YOU ARE A LEGEND.
MINISTER BEETH SPEAKS THE TRUTH, GENERAL. WE'VE ALL HEARD THE STORIES. YOUR HEROISM AT THE SIEGE OF GANSEVOR AND THE WAY YOU SAVED THAT POOR PATHFINDER TEAM...
WE ARE TRULY FORTUNATE YOU CHOSE THIS PLANET AS YOUR HOME FOR RETIREMENT.
I CAME HERE BECAUSE I WAS DONE WITH WAR.
BUT I SUPPOSE WAR WASN'T DONE WITH ME.
I CAN SEE A WAY THROUGH, MAYOR. I CAN END THE CRISIS WITH MINIMAL MILITARY LOSSES AND PROBABLY ZERO CIVILIAN CASUALTIES.
THAT'S WONDERFUL. COORDINATE WITH THE DEFENSE MINISTER AND HIS TEAM. YOUR INPUT WILL BE INVALUABLE.
NO, I'M SORRY, BUT I DON'T THINK THAT WILL WORK.
THIS WILL REQUIRE SPLIT-SECOND DEPLOYMENTS, QUICK REACTIONS...
I CAN'T EXPLAIN MY TACTICS. I JUST NEED TO EXECUTE THEM.
YOU'RE SUGGESTING WE GIVE YOU CONTROL OF OUR MILITARY? THAT WON'T HAPPEN. NO ONE DOUBTS YOUR SKILL, BUT WE CAN DEFEND OURSELVES.
I UNDERSTAND COMPLETELY. IN THAT CASE, I'D LIKE TO GET TO ONE OF THE CIVILIAN DEFENSE BUNKERS.
I THINK IT'S GOING TO GET... PRETTY ROUGH UP HERE.
WAIT. GENERAL, WE NEED YOU. OUR RESOURCES ARE AT YOUR DISPOSAL.
THANK YOU, YOUR HONOR. I WON'T LET YOU DOWN.

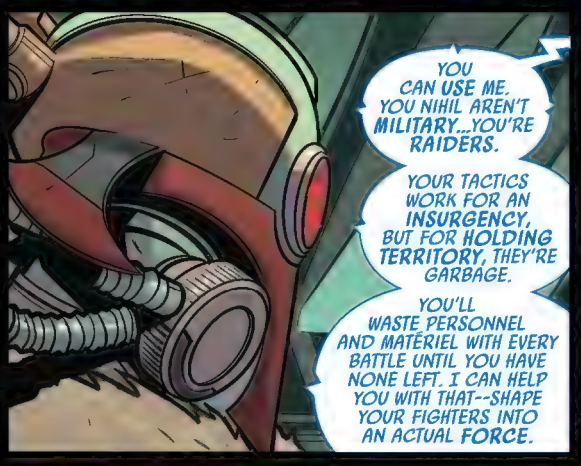
SEND THE FIGHTERS DOWN. FOCUS ON THE ANTIAIR DEFENSE EMPLACEMENTS. ONCE THOSE ARE GONE, WE CAN PEEL THIS CITY OPEN LIKE A PIECE OF FRUIT.
YES, MARCHION.
THE NIHIL HAVE DEPLOYED THEIR ATTACK CRAFTS!
I'VE GIVEN YOU ACCESS CODES TO THE DEFENSE GRID, GENERAL VIESS, AND OUR PILOTS ARE IN THEIR SHIPS, AWAITING YOUR ORDERS.
THANK YOU, MINISTER BEETH. I KNOW THIS WASN'T EASY FOR YOU...
SLSH
HRRRRKL!
...BUT IT'S ALL IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE CITY.
NNGH!
ZZR
ARGH!
NOW, LET'S JUST SEE HERE.
KKCHK
WHAT THE--

KTHOOOM
THEY JUST... DESTROYED THEIR OWN FLEET! AND NOW ALL THEIR DEFENSIVE EMPLACEMENTS ARE POINTED *RIGHT AT THE CITY.*
IT'S LIKE THEY'RE HOLDING A GUN TO THEIR OWN HEAD. I DON'T--
I DO. TELL OUR SHIPS TO HOLD OFF ON THE ATTACK... FOR NOW.
A TRANSMISSION SHOULD BE COMING ALONG SHORTLY.
WHEN IT DOES, PUT THROUGH WHOEVER'S CALLING.
I'LL BE VERY INTERESTED TO MEET THEM.


HELLO. YOU MUST BE MARCHION RO.
MY NAME IS GENERAL VIESS. I HAVE DELIVERED YOU THIS CITY WITHOUT YOU NEEDING TO FIRE A SINGLE SHOT.
I SEE THAT, GENERAL. I AM CURIOUS AS TO WHY.

CONSIDER IT...AN AUDITION.

YOU THINK I WOULD EMPLOY SOMEONE WHO BETRAYED THEIR OWN PEOPLE AT THE FIRST OPPORTUNITY?
THESE ARE NOT MY PEOPLE. I JUST LIVE HERE. BUT YOU'RE CORRECT--I AM EXCELLENT AT RECOGNIZING OPPORTUNITY WHEN I SEE IT.
IN FACT, I MADE AN ENTIRE CAREER OUT OF IT. ASK AROUND--I'M SURE SOME OF YOUR PEOPLE KNOW MY NAME.


YOU CAN USE ME. YOU NIHIL AREN'T MILITARY...YOU'RE RAIDERS.
YOUR TACTICS WORK FOR AN INSURGENCY, BUT FOR HOLDING TERRITORY, THEY'RE GARBAGE.
YOU'LL WASTE PERSONNEL AND MATÉRIEL WITH EVERY BATTLE UNTIL YOU HAVE NONE LEFT. I CAN HELP YOU WITH THAT--SHAPE YOUR FIGHTERS INTO AN ACTUAL FORCE.

BUT THAT'S NOT THE BEST REASON YOU SHOULD BRING ME ABOARD.
THE BEST REASON...

...IS THIS.
YOU WON'T JUST BE FIGHTING THE REPUBLIC, WILL YOU? NO...YOU'VE GOT A JEDI PROBLEM. EVERYONE'S HEARD THE STORIES.
THERE ARE JEDI INSIDE THE STORMWALL. UNTIL THEY'RE GONE, YOU'LL NEVER BE SAFE.
I'VE BEEN HUNTING AND KILLING JEDI FOR OVER A CENTURY.
I CAN DO IT FOR YOU.
I NEED THE WHY, GENERAL. WHY NOT JUST LAY LOW, AVOID THE CONFLICT AS BEST AS YOU CAN?
BECAUSE I KNOW A WINNER WHEN I SEE ONE, MARCHION RO.
HNH.
I AM NOT JUST ANOTHER FOOL FOR YOU TO PLAY WITH. BETRAY ME, FAIL ME OR FLEE...AND I'LL PEEL OFF YOUR SKIN AND ROLL YOU IN SALT.
ASK AROUND. PEOPLE KNOW MY NAME TOO.
WELCOME TO THE NIHIL, GENERAL VIESS.

HETZAL. THE GLORIOUS CAPITOL OF THE NIHIL FREE SECTORS.
FORMER PLANETARY PARLIAMENT. CURRENT NIHIL MEGA-FORTRESS.
GENERAL VIESS CLAIMS TO HAVE RELIABLE INTELLIGENCE CONFIRMING THE PRESENCE OF JEDI MASTER *PORTER ENGLE* WITHIN OUR TERRITORY.
FIVE MONTHS AFTER THE FALL OF STARLIGHT BEACON.
PLEASE REMIND THE GENERAL THAT WE DON'T NEED CONFIRMATION OF PORTER ENGLE'S *PRESENCE.* WE ALREADY KNOW HE'S HERE.
WE NEED CONFIRMATION OF HIS *DEATH.*
WHAT ELSE DO YOU HAVE FOR ME?
WE'VE CAPTURED A FORMER REPUBLIC PRISON NEAR RYLOTH.
I'VE HAD MY TEAM EVALUATE THE LIST OF INMATES TO SEE IF ANY OF OUR PEOPLE WERE DETAINED OR IF THERE MIGHT BE OTHER USEFUL ASSETS WE CAN RETRIEVE.
SO FAR--
WAIT.
THIS ONE HERE.
BOOLAN.

"I KNOW THAT NAME."
OI. BOOLAN. YOU'VE GOT A VISITOR.
DON'T KNOW HOW YOU RATED SOMEONE IMPORTANT LIKE THIS--BUT BE ON YOUR BEST BEHAVIOR, OR YOU'LL REGRET IT.
I KNOW NO OTHER WAY TO BEHAVE. EVERYTHING I DO IS THE BEST.
I CAN RELATE.

YOU'RE... MARCHION RO. THE EYE OF THE NIHIL.

AND YOU... ARE BOOLAN. I HAVE HEARD OF YOU.

AND I YOU. YOUR ANCESTORS AS WELL. YOU ARE NOT THE FIRST *EVERENI* I HAVE MET.

I KNOW YOUR PEOPLE... AND THEIR CAPABILITIES... BETTER THAN MOST.

YOU JUST KILLED YOURSELF, BOOLAN.

BUT MAYBE YOU CAN SAVE YOURSELF TOO.

I POSSESS A ***WEAPON***, A BIOLOGICAL WEAPON THAT CAN TARGET AND KILL JEDI.

I WISH TO MAKE IT MORE POWERFUL AND FINE-TUNE MY CONTROL.

CAN YOU HELP ME ACHIEVE THIS GOAL?

YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE ***NAMELESS***.

OF ***COURSE*** I CAN HELP YOU WITH THE NAMELESS. THEY'RE ***FASCINATING*** CREATURES. I WOULD GIVE ALMOST ***ANYTHING*** TO WORK WITH THEM.

BUT YOU MUST UNDERSTAND, I HAVE MANY IDEAS. ***SO MANY*** IDEAS.

THE REPUBLIC'S INANE AND UNFAIR RESTRICTIONS ON MEDICAL INNOVATION KEPT ME FROM DOING EVERYTHING I WANTED. THAT'S HOW I ENDED UP ***HERE***.

BUT I BELIEVE YOU AND I MIGHT POSSESS A SIMILAR, *AH...**SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE*** WHEN IT COMES TO SUCH THINGS.

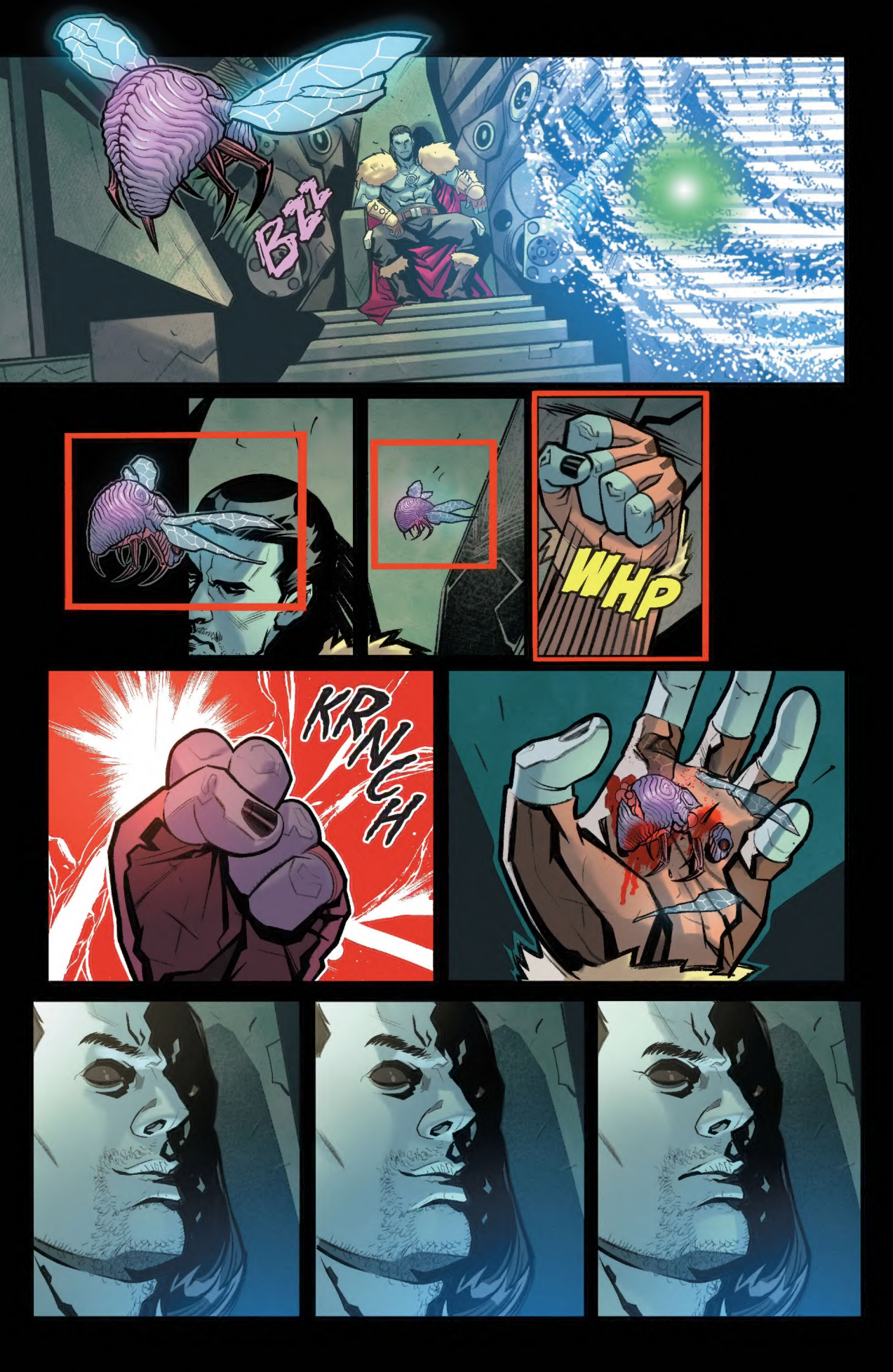
MY, MY, BOOLAN.

ADVENTUROUS INDEED.

HAVE I SAVED MY LIFE?
FOR NOW, YES. CONSIDER ME INTRIGUED.
MOVING FORWARD... WE'LL TAKE IT DAY BY DAY.
I'LL NEED CREDITS, OF COURSE, AND EQUIPMENT AND A SAFE PLACE TO DO MY WORK.
WHERE I WON'T BE DISTURBED.
ALL EASILY ARRANGED. THE NIHIL ARE GENEROUS TO OUR PEOPLE, BOOLAN.
ANOTHER THING. IT'S BARON BOOLAN.
IS IT NOW?
FREEDOM!
THIS IS VERY GOOD.
I ONLY HAVE ONE MORE REQUEST.

YOU'VE GOT QUITE A FEW REQUESTS, FOR SOMEONE WHO HASN'T DONE ANYTHING YET.
I THINK YOU'LL LIKE THIS ONE.
THE GUARDS WHO WERE HERE BEFORE... THE REPUBLIC GUARDS. WHERE ARE THEY?
WE PUT 'EM ALL IN HOLDING CELLS DOWN ON THE LOWEST LEVEL UNTIL WE GET 'EM INTERROGATED. MIGHT TRY TO RANSOM SOME OFF. WHY?
I WILL REQUIRE TEST SUBJECTS.
HEH.
YOU'RE RIGHT, BARON BOOLAN.
I LIKED THAT A LOT.

HETZAL.
A YEAR (LESS A WEEK) FROM STARLIGHT'S FALL.
MARCHION, THIS IS INCREDIBLE.
YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED SO MUCH. THE MINISTRIES OF PROTECTION AND ADVANCEMENT YOU ORGANIZED UNDER GENERAL VIESS AND BARON BOOLAN ARE WELL ESTABLISHED.
TO SAY NOTHING OF MY OWN MINISTRY OF INFORMATION.
YOU'VE EVEN GOT A JEDI TO KILL--THAT GRANDMASTER MELIS SHRYKE BROUGHT YOU.
TEMPESTS. JUST MORE TEMPESTS, MORE TEMPEST RUNNERS.
A MILITARY, INDUSTRY, DIPLOMACY--OUT OF NOTHING, OUT OF UTTER CHAOS, YOU'VE CREATED THE BONES OF A WORKING STATE.
NO ONE ELSE COULD HAVE DONE SO MUCH WITH SO LITTLE.
IT'S NOT ABOUT CONQUEST. IT'S NOT ABOUT DESTRUCTION. IT'S ABOUT WHAT YOU LEAVE BEHIND.
I'M SO PROUD OF YOU.
IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME, I NEED TO WORK ON MY INITIAL STATEMENT TO CORUSCANT LAYING OUT OUR DEMANDS--IT'S NEARLY THE ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF STARLIGHT BEACON'S FALL.
OUR STRENGTH WILL BE AT THE FOREFRONT OF THEIR MINDS.
THE REPUBLIC HAS NO IDEA WHAT WE'VE BECOME. WHAT YOU HAVE MADE US, MY EYE OF THE NIHIL.
MY MARCHION.


BZZ
WHP
KRNCH

CONQUEST.
DESTRUCTION.
WHAT I LEAVE BEHIND.
NOT THE END....

THE HIGH REPUBLIC ERA CONTINUES IN:

STAR WARS THE HIGH REPUBLIC #4

By **CAVAN SCOTT & JIM TOWE**
Cover by **PHIL NOTO**

CHECKLIST

- [x] THE HIGH REPUBLIC: SHADOWS OF STARLIGHT #1
- [x] THE HIGH REPUBLIC #1
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